Intelligence Oversight Comp

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By Walter Pincus
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The powerful Democratic whip, Sen. Robert C. Byrd (W.Va.), declared yesterday that there is "no way" the resolution to establish a new Senate committee on intelligence activities could pass "as now written."

Saying the "political climate indicates a necessity for some kind of committee," Byrd offered a compromise plan to solve a jurisdiction fight that has entangled the present proposal.

Under the Byrd plan, a new, permanent Senate intelligence oversight committee would be set up with subpoena power but without budgetary control over intelligence agencies.

Byrd's suggestion came during Senate Rules Committee questioning of Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho), chairman of the Senate intelligence committee and an architect of the proposal under attack.

Under the resolution approved March 2 by the Senate overnment Operations Committee, the new intelligence committee would have taken jurisdiction over intelligence agencies' budgets from three powerful Senate committees—Armed Services, Judiciary and Foreign Relations.

All three committees have raised objections to the proposal.

Byrd told Church: "That road is so formidable, and difficult to travel." Instead he suggested that, "we may achieve the desired objective" by giving subpoena power to the new committee and "leaving the rest where it lies."

Otherwise, Byrd said, approval might be endangered because "the resolution will be subjected to unlimited debate."

In his initial statement, Church said overlapping or concurrent jurisdiction between the new committee and the old ones was the "traditional" Senate solution "where the interest of two committees... is strong."

After Byrd offered his compromise, Church argued "the power of the purse is the ultimate authority" and he" couldn't see effective oversight with out' it.

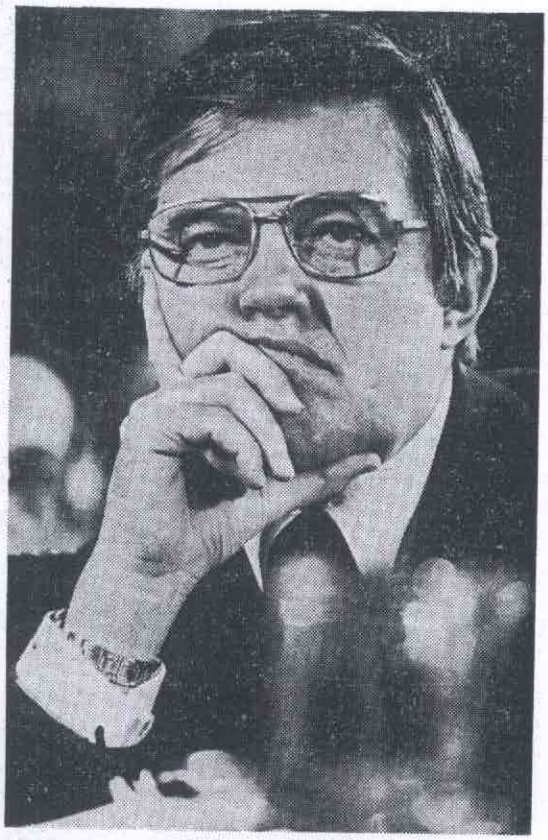
A letter from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, introdced at the hearing yesterday, supported the position-that is is impossible to separate cleanly the Defense Department's intelligence budget from its overall spending since many programs are intermixed.

Rumsfeld echoed the Byrd suggestion that the new committe undertake only intelligence oversight.

Other senators raised with Church the proposal that the new committee be authorized to disclose classified information over a President's objection.

Church responded, saying rity" he had ever seen was the recent disclosure by the CIA that the Israeli government possesses 10 or more nuclear weapons. "I have never even heard anyone was reprimanded," Church said.

To emphasize his point



By James K. W. Atherton—The Washington Post

Sen. Frank Church at hearing on intelligence oversight.

romise Offered

that the resolution as now written was vulnerable to attack, Byrd spent 20 minutes listing more than a dozen Senate rules that would have to be revised in major or minor ways to conform to the resolution's language.

Sen. Abraham A. Ribicoff (D-Conn.), chairman of the Government Operations Committee that drafted the resolution, told Byrd "not a single point there can't be reconciled "by redrafting the resolution.

Ribicoff proposed a staff meeting to iron out differences but Rules Committee Chairman Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev.) said that was "premature" since "we don't know ourselves" what is needed.